[English]

Purchase of AS 90 Guns

249. KUMARI UMA BHARTI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to purchase the British AS 90 self-propelled guns;

(b) if so, when; and

(c) the salient features of the gun and its capability as compared to Bofors gun?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHARD PAWAR): (a) to (c). The Army has received a number of offers of self-propelled guns, including the British As. 90. The various offered guns have not been evaluated.

Disposal of Cases in Supreme Court/ High Courts

251. SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been any discernible progress in the rate of disposal of cases in the Supreme Court and High Courts after the increase in the number of judges thereof; and

(b) if not, the steps proposed to be taken by the Government for expeditious disposal of cases and clear the backlog of the pending cases?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI RANGARAJAN KUMARAMANGALAM): (a) Yes, Sir. There has been a perceptible improvement. In the case of Supreme Court of India, the number of pending cases which was 201383 as on 1.1.90 has come down to 135374 as on 1.10.1991. As regards the High Courts, although the pendency of cases has increased due to institution of larger number of cases, the rate of disposal and quantum of disposal has increased during the last few years. The number of cases disposed in 1989 were 770946 as compared to 605698 in 1985.

(b) Besides increasing the Judge strength from time to time, various other steps such as grouping of cases requiring quick disposal, constitution of specialised benches, etc. have been taken. The Benches are being so constituted in the Supreme Court that they function for a longer period and the work so allocated that similar matters are posted before the same Bench. The various recommendations including those relating to procedural and jurisdictional reforms contained in the Report of the Arrears Committee (Malimath Committee), which went into the problem of arrears in High Courts, have been forwarded to all the High Courts, State Governments and concerned Central Ministries for suitable follow-up action.

Thefts in Container Warehouse of NHAVA SHEVA Port

252. SHRI GURUDAS KAMAT: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) the number of thefts taken place in the container warehouse of Nhava Sheva Port during the last three years and the amount involved therein;

(b) the parties which owned these warehouses; and

(c) the action taken against them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT

(SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) to (c). There is a warehouse at the Container Freight Station under the management of Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC). As ascertained from Central Warehousing Corporation, there was only one theft during last three years of estimated amount of Rs.16,000/-. A First Information Report (FIR) was lodged by CWC with the police.

Calcutta Port

253. SHRIMATI MALINI BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been a reduction in tonnags and in the number of ships carrying cargo at the Calcutta Port during the last several years:

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether there has also been a reduction in the number of workers and employees at Calcutta port and dock;

(d) if so, to what extent; and

(e) the steps taken by the Government to improve the working of Calcutta Port?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) No Sir, there has been no reduction in tonnage handled at Calcutta port but the number of ships handled at Calcutta port has reduced.

(b) The details for the past 5 years are as follows:

Year	*Tonnage handled*	*No. of ships handled (in 000 M.T.)*
1986-87	12072	1400
1987-88	13071	1394
1988-89	14223	1364
1989-90	14689	1393
1990-91	15420	1366

The reduction has been due to increase in the parcel size.

(c) Yes sir.

(d) The extent of reduction in past five years is as under:

Year	*No. of employees in Calcutta Port*
1986	28414
1987	26849
1988	26431
1989	25702
1990	24846

(e) Following steps have been taken:

(i) Improvement in draught